

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 ARA-10 HA-05
ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /127 W
-----082575 111557Z /46

R 111440Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8358
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 1170

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MILL, AG, US, SS, CU, ET
SUBJ: GOA CALLS IN AMBASSADOR FOR DISCUSSION OF SAHARA, HORN AND
APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT

REFS: A) ALGIERS 1023, B) STATE 083970, C) NOUAKCHOTT 0900,
D) RABAT 1940, E) STATE 086083

1. SUMMARY. IN FOLLOW-UP TO ALGIERS REFTEL, MFA SECGEN DOWNPLAYED
OFFICIAL GOA INTEREST IN USG INITIATION OF SAHARA MEDIATION, YET
CLEARLY CONVEYED THAT CONCEPT OF NEGOTIATION-MEDIATION GAINING CRE-
DENCE IN UPPER LEVELS OF GOA AND POSSIBLY WITHIN POLISARIO LEADER-
SHIP. SECGEN GLOSSED OVER SITUATION IN HORN OF AFRICA BUT IMPLIED
THAT GOA SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT WANING. HE EXPRES-
SED INTEREST IN AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S AFRICAN TRAVELS AND SUGGESTED
YOUNG MAY WISH TO VISIT ALGERIA AND HAVE CONTACT WITH GOA/POLISARIO
TO OBTAIN BALANCED PERSPECTIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 9 SECGEN OF MFA MISSOUH SBIH CALLED ME TO HIS OFFICE
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FOR LOW-KEY DISCUSSION OF SAHARA, HORN AND MY REQUEST FOR APPOINT-
MENT WITH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE TO DELIVER LETTER FROM PRESIDENT
CARTER. CLEARLY, THE SUBJECT OF GREATEST CONCERN TO HIM WAS THE
POSSIBILITY OF ORGANIZING PRELIMINARY CONTACTS WITH THE PARTIES
INVOLVED IN THE SAHARA CONFLICT WITH A VIEW TOWARD REACHING A NEGO-
TIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT.

3. SAHARA. REFERRING TO MY RECENT EXCHANGE WITH MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS BOUSSELHAM (ALGIERS 1023), SBIH WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO EMPHASIZE THAT BOUSSELHAM'S COMMENTS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS A GOA INITIATIVE TO GET THE USG TO PLAY A ROLE IN BRINGING TOGETHER THE PARTIES TO A POSSIBLE NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF THE SAHARA CONFLICT. I REPLIED THAT I DID NOT INTERPRET THOSE COMMENTS AS SUCH AND THAT I WAS STILL AWAITING A FOLLOWUP TO OUR DISCUSSION FROM BOUSSELHAM AS HE HAD PROMISED, WHEREUPON SBIH INFORMED ME THAT MY MEETING WITH HIM (SBIH) SHOULD BE CONSIDERED THAT FOLLOWUP.

4. HAVING DISAVOWED THAT THE GOA WAS TAKING ANY INITIATIVE IN THIS MATTER, SBIH THEN PROBED ME ON THE TWO POINTS THAT I BELIEVE ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST TO THE GOA. FIRST, HE ASKED WHETHER I THOUGHT THE USG WOULD WISH TO PLAY A ROLE IN ORGANIZING THE NEGOTIATIONS. I REPLIED THAT I COULD NOT ANSWER HIS QUESTION WITH CERTAINTY WITHOUT ASKING MY GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, I COULD SPECULATE ON THE BASIS OF OUR PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED POLICY ON THE SAHARA THAT THE USG (A) CERTAINLY FAVORS A NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT INSTEAD OF A MILITARY ONE AND (B) OUR POSITION OF NEUTRALITY WOULD NOT PERMIT THE USG TO INTERVENE IN THE SAHARA CONFLICT BY TAKING STEPS ON OUR OWN INITIATIVE TO BRING THE PARTIES INVOLVED TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE.

5. SBIH QUICKLY TURNED TO HIS SECOND POINT WHICH WAS TO ASK WHETHER THE USG HAD ANY FIRM EVIDENCE THAT THE MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO ANY OVERTURES TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT AT

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THIS TIME. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NO SUCH EVIDENCE OF THEIR RECEPTIVITY AND THAT I HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE USG WOULD SOUND OUT THE MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE. IN TURN, I ASKED SBIH WHETHER HE HAD ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE POLISARIO WOULD BE RECEPTIVE. HE REPLIED RATHER GUARDEDLY THAT THE POLISARIO LEADERS WERE REASONABLE MEN WHO COULD BE EXPECTED TO LISTEN TO ANYONE WITH A PROPOSAL FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE SAHARA CONFLICT.

6. SBIH ASKED ME WHETHER I HAD READ PRESS REPORTS OF A RECENT STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG IN DAKAR CRITICIZING FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, BUT SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDING THE FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE SAHARA FROM HIS COMMENTS. HE SAID THAT THE SAME PRESS REPORTS INDICATED THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAD MET WITH MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH IN THE COURSE OF HIS DAKAR VISIT. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NOT YET SEEN THE REPORTS.

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7. SBIH WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE GOA WOULD WELCOME A VISIT FROM AMBASSADOR YOUNG IN THE COURSE OF ONE OF HIS TRIPS TO AFRICA IN ORDER TO HELP HIM BETTER UNDERSTAND THE POSITION OF THE POLISARIO AND THE GOA IN THE SAHARA CONFLICT. IDEALLY, HE ADDED, AMBASSADOR YOUNG SHOULD HAVE DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE POLISARIO TO BALANCE THE CONTACTS HE ALREADY HAS HAD WITH THE MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS.

8. HORN OF AFRICA: RAISING THE SUBJECT OF FOREIGN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, I ASKED SBIH FOR THE GOA POSITION ON CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE ERITREAN CONFLICT (STATE 086083). HE REPLIED THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED TO THE GOA SATISFACTION THAT CUBAN TROOPS AND/OR ADVISORS ARE INVOLVED IN ERITREA. HE SAID THE ONLY REPORTS OF SUCH INTERVENTION COME FROM AMERICAN SOURCES AND EVEN THOSE REPORTS DO NOT CONCLUSIVELY ESTABLISH CUBAN PRESENCE. IN ANY EVENT, HE SAID, THE GOA DISTINGUISHES BETWEEN POSSIBLE CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ERITREA AT THE REQUEST OF THE SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT FOR ASSISTANCE IN SETTLING A PURELY INTERNAL MATTER AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FRENCH INTERVENTION IN THE SAHARA AT THE REQUEST OF A GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN A CONFLICT OVER A TER-

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RITORY OVER WHICH IT HAS NO LEGITIMATE CLAIM OF SOVEREIGNTY.

9. APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT: SBIH INFORMED ME THAT PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE WOULD SEE ME AFTER MY RETURN FROM THE TASSILI AROUND APRIL 17 TO RECEIVE THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER ON BOUMEDIENE'S VISIT TO THE U.S. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT HAD ASKED HIM TO EXTEND HIS APO-

LOGIES FOR THE DELAY, EXPLAINING THAT HE HAD AN EXCEPTIONALLY HEAVY SCHEDULE THIS MONTH.

10. COMMENT: IT IS BECOMING CLEAR THAT, WHILE KEENLY INTERESTED IN SAHARA NEGOTIATIONS AT THIS TIME, THE GOA DOES NOT WANT TO RUN THE RISK OF BEING SEEN AS TAKING THE FIRST STEP. WHILE ALL THE TIME DISCLAIMING ANY SUCH INTENTION, I BELIEVE THEY WOULD LIKE THE USG TO TAKE THE PRELIMINARY SOUNDINGS OF MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN RECEPTIVITY. IN THIS WAY THE GOA DOES NOT (A) RISK USING UP ANY CREDIT, SHOULD THERE BE NO RECEPTIVITY AND (B) WEAKEN ITS POTENTIAL BARGAINING POSITION SHOULD SUCH NEGOTIATIONS EVER TAKE PLACE.

11. A SECOND GOA PURPOSE IN RAISING SAHARA WITH US MAY SIMPLY HAVE BEEN TO TAKE A HIGH-LEVEL SOUNDING ON OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROBLEM IN WAKE OF DECISION NOT TO SELL ARMS TO MOROCCANS FOR USE IN FORMER COLONY. SUCH AN INTEREST WOULD ACCOUNT FOR ALGERIAN REQUESTS TO NIGERIAN AND LIBERIAN GOVERNMENTS TO HAVE MATTER RAISED WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING HIS AFRICAN TOUR. (STATE 083970, STATE 085279 AND STATE 085710, ALL NOTAL).

12. ON HORN OF AFRICA, SBIH'S COMMENTS ELLIPTICAL BUT SUGGEST THAT GOA HAS DECIDED NOT TO POSE OBJECTION TO POSSIBLE CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ERITREA. THIS WOULD END GOA POLICY BEGUN IN LATE 1960S, OF SUPPORT FOR ELF. GOA CEASED BOTH MILITARY AND HUMANITARIAN AID TO ELF IN LATE SUMMER 1977 AND SBIH'S COMMENTS INDICATE THAT IT NOW HAS TURNED CORNER POLITICALLY AS WELL. HIS DESCRIPTION OF ERITREA CONFLICT AS PURELY INTERNAL CONFLICT IS SIGNIFICANT IN THIS RESPECT. CONFIDENTIAL

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NEW POLICY HAS ADVANTAGE FOR GOA OF BEING CONSISTENT WITH OAU CHARTER'S PROVISION OF INVIOABILITY OF AFRICAN COLONIAL FRONTIERS AND HENCE OF FURTHERING ALGERIAN POSITION ON SAHARA. THIS IS ALSO SECOND TIME THAT MINISTRY OFFICIALS HAVE FLOATED THE IDEA OF A VISIT BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG. IN THE COURSE OF A LUNCHEON OFFERED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOR THE RECENT SISTER CITIES DELEGATION, AND IN THE CONTEXT OF AN EXCHANGE OF REMARKS ON THE NEED TO ENCOURAGE ALL KINDS OF PRIVATE AND OFFICIAL CONTACTS BETWEEN ALGERIA AND THE U.S., BOUSSELHAM SAID THAT THE GOA WOULD WELCOME A VISIT BY AMBASSADOR YOUNG, WHOM, HE STRESSED, ALGERIANS RESPECT GREATLY. HAYNES

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